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ABSTRACT

To support and substantiate the assertion that the relationship between teacher and students matters a great deal when written literacy is at stake, a case study was made of a teacher in one high school creative writing class during one semester. The intent was to learn more about the socially negotiated nature of school writing and to identify ways in which the teacher supported the acquisition process. Data were obtained through (1) field notes of classroom participant observation; (2) journals kept by the teacher containing his thoughts on the teaching of writing; (3) samples of naturally occuring student writing in the creative writing class; and (4) dialogue journals in which six student volunteers wrote with a researcher about their perceptions of the creative writing class. The data revealed that the teacher was not the sole audience for student writing or its formal evaluator. Using the writing contest as an "occasion for writing," the teacher helped students to write for audiences other than the teacher and for purposes beyond academic performance. As a teacher he enacted his role in several ways, including foreshadowing or providing context for the writing act, modeling the role of writer, motivating and providing resources to the student writer, creating the space within which writing can happen, and coaching by offering rhetorical strategies and encouraging responses to student efforts. (HOD)

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THE TEACHER AS RESPONDENT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITER

Saundra Dunn, Susan Florio-Ruane,
and Christopher M. Clark

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Abstract

In this paper the authors distinguish between what is typically thought of as "response to student writing" and what they view as the important instructional process--response to the student. They argue that to construe the teacher's problem as one of response to writing is to take out of context communication that is actually part of a social process. Their research findings from a descriptive study of high school writing instruction illustrate that the process of response to the students doing writing is part of the wider classroom social system in which the teacher-student relationship matters a great deal.

THE TEACHER AS RESPONDENT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL WRITER[1]

Saundra Dunn, Susan Florio-Ruane, and Christopher M. Clark[2]

Many teachers and theorists would accept as a truism the statement that in learning to write, the relationship between teacher and student matters a great deal. Yet while it seems obvious that student writing and teacher response would be at the very heart of any successful writing curriculum, many teachers find the task of responding to student writers unwieldy and difficult. In addition, many students experience confusion about the purpose and meaning of the writing they do in school.

These problems seem greatest in the secondary school, often the last chance for students to receive formal instruction in written literacy. Here the roles of teacher and student in the writing process can be complex. Moffett (1983) asserts, for example, that for the high school teacher to act as audience is "a very delicate matter fraught with hazards that need special attention" (p. 103).

We explore here the relationship of one teacher to his high school writers in one high school creative writing class. By means of this case study, we hope to support and instantiate the assertion that the relationship between teacher and students matters a great deal when written literacy is at

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[1]Paper prepared for inclusion in *The Acquisition of Written Language: Revision and Response*, S. W. Freedman (ed.) (forthcoming).

[2]Saundra Dunn is a research intern with the IRT's Written Literacy Forum, which Susan Florio-Ruane and Christopher M. Clark coordinate. Florio-Ruane is an associate professor of teacher education, and Clark, professor of counseling, educational psychology and special education. The work of the Forum is funded by the NIE (Contract No. R-400-79-0046).

stake. We also hope, by portraying one teacher's approach in the role of respondent to his student writers, to encourage teachers to think about the many alternatives available to them when they work with young adult writers.

Elsewhere, we have written about constraints on the teacher's planning and instruction imposed by district mandates and policies and about the way these are managed by Mr. Jameson[3] in teaching his freshman English classes (Florio, 1982). In creative writing, in contrast to freshman English, Mr. Jameson exercises considerably more autonomy in determining what will be taught when and how. We present here an overview of his curriculum for creative writing and consider several facets of his role in response to the student writer. These facets include the teacher as creator of an environment for writing, model of the role of writer, motivator and resource person, and coach of the writing process.

The Study

Guided by concerns about the relationship between student writers and their teachers, we identified a high school teacher noted for his effectiveness in motivating students to write. We spent one semester documenting the planning and teaching of Mr. Jameson and eliciting his students' perspectives on the writing they did in his high school creative writing class. Our intention was to learn more about the socially-negotiated nature of school writing and to identify ways in which one teacher supported the acquisition process.

Taking multiple vantage points on the process of writing in high school, we focused on Mr. Jameson's perspectives about writing and its instruction and on the interpretations of his students about what happens in their class. We collected the following data:

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[3]Pseudonyms are used throughout this case study.

1. field notes of classroom participant observation,
2. journals kept by Mr. Jameson containing his thoughts on the teaching of writing,
3. samples of naturally-occurring student writing in the creative writing class, and
4. dialogue journals in which six student volunteers wrote with a researcher about their perceptions of the creative writing class.

We used these data to test and provide evidence for an evolving set of assertions about the variety of ways that Mr. Jameson enacts the role of teacher as he responds to student writing.

School and Community

Mr. Jameson teaches creative writing, a multi-grade elective class, in a moderate-sized suburb of a state capitol in the midwest, which is also the home of a large, land-grant university. Many, if not most, of Mr. Jameson's students share the community's high regard for educational achievement. Almost all, for example, said that "going to college" was a major goal of theirs when Mr. Jameson surveyed them in September. The concern for school achievement among students and parents is not without its costs, however. In early interviews and journal entries, Mr. Jameson spoke of the difficulty of teaching writing to young adults so concerned with achievement and the pleasing of authority. Writing in his journal on September 14, 1982, Mr. Jameson noted, for example:

> When you mentioned that the "lack of skills" is not an impediment to student writing at (this high school) you're essentially correct. Except for a few students who have been identified as learning problems and for the most part are receiving more help here at (this high school) than at many other places they might be going to school, most (of these) students could be exciting, creative, original writers if you could map an entry space into a territory which valued personal expression as much or more than "standard" writing. Real writing is such a joy, but like all arts, it is indulged in only at the risk of engaging yourself in what you have to say. It is a difficult step for

> anyone to take. One of the reasons I've remained in secondary teaching is that I've always thought it was a step that students made more easily than adults. Perhaps this isn't so any longer.

A day later, Mr. Jameson made the following observations in his journal about what had gone on in his class:

> Had students read aloud today and was impressed for the most part by their reading skills. However, one curious impression emerged. A number of students were technically proficient readers. The words were all recognized and pronounced correctly, taking into consideration punctuation, but there was no magic, no celebration in their voices. No recognition of the imaginative role of language. No wonder at making another world come alive in their minds. How to help kids this year enter more animatedly into the world of imagination is a major goal for me.

These journal entries not only highlight problems that Mr. Jameson perceives among his would-be writers, but they begin to identify his values and commitments as a teacher of creative writing.

Creative writing is an unusual course at Mr. Jameson's high school. Because it is one of the few remaining electives in the curriculum, a diverse group of students from across the upper three grades take it for varying reasons. Some take it to augment their English curriculum with more writing opportunities. Others take it because they are particularly interested in fiction writing. Still others find themselves in creative writing because it is one of the few classes that fits their schedules.

After nearly a decade of electives and relative openness to student curricular choice, the curriculum in Mr. Jameson's high school has been narrowed in recent years. There are few elective courses available to students through the English department, which offers mainly the required courses of English I, II, and III. Creative and expository writing are the notable exceptions.

Classroom and Curriculum

Mr. Jameson's classroom was a visual buffet. Not only were there samples of his own photographs and paintings throughout the room, but charcoal sketches, airbrush designs, and oil paintings done by his students hung from every wall. Artwork even lined the space between the top edge of the chalkboard and the ceiling. The classroom had five bulletin boards, which Mr. Jameson changed often, sometimes to reflect the theme of a unit in one of his classes, sometimes to display student work, sometimes to share interesting newspaper or magazine articles, and sometimes to relieve his boredom with the previous display. He used the bulletin board near the chalkboard to post announcements, especially concerning writing contests. Figure 1 is a map of the classroom, highlighting the locations of the visual displays.

This was our first impression of life within Room 10. This was also the scene that greet Mr. Jameson's students on the first day of school. The creative writing class met in the late morning, five days per week. During the term we observed, 18 young men and 6 young women were enrolled. Many of the students shared their work and ideas with us during class time, and 6 of them volunteered to keep dialogue journals with us outside the class.

Three broad areas of creative writing were discussed during the first semester: poetry, the short story, and the play. Poetry was the focus of the first 10 weeks of the semester. Creative writing in prose form was the focus of the remainder of the semester, building up to the major project of writing a short story or a play.

Within the poetry section of the semester, students discussed and wrote about several topics. A timeline of the poetry topics is provided in Figure 2. Each week, the class discussed two or three topics. Mr. Jameson prompted class discussions in any of several ways, among them, reading aloud the work

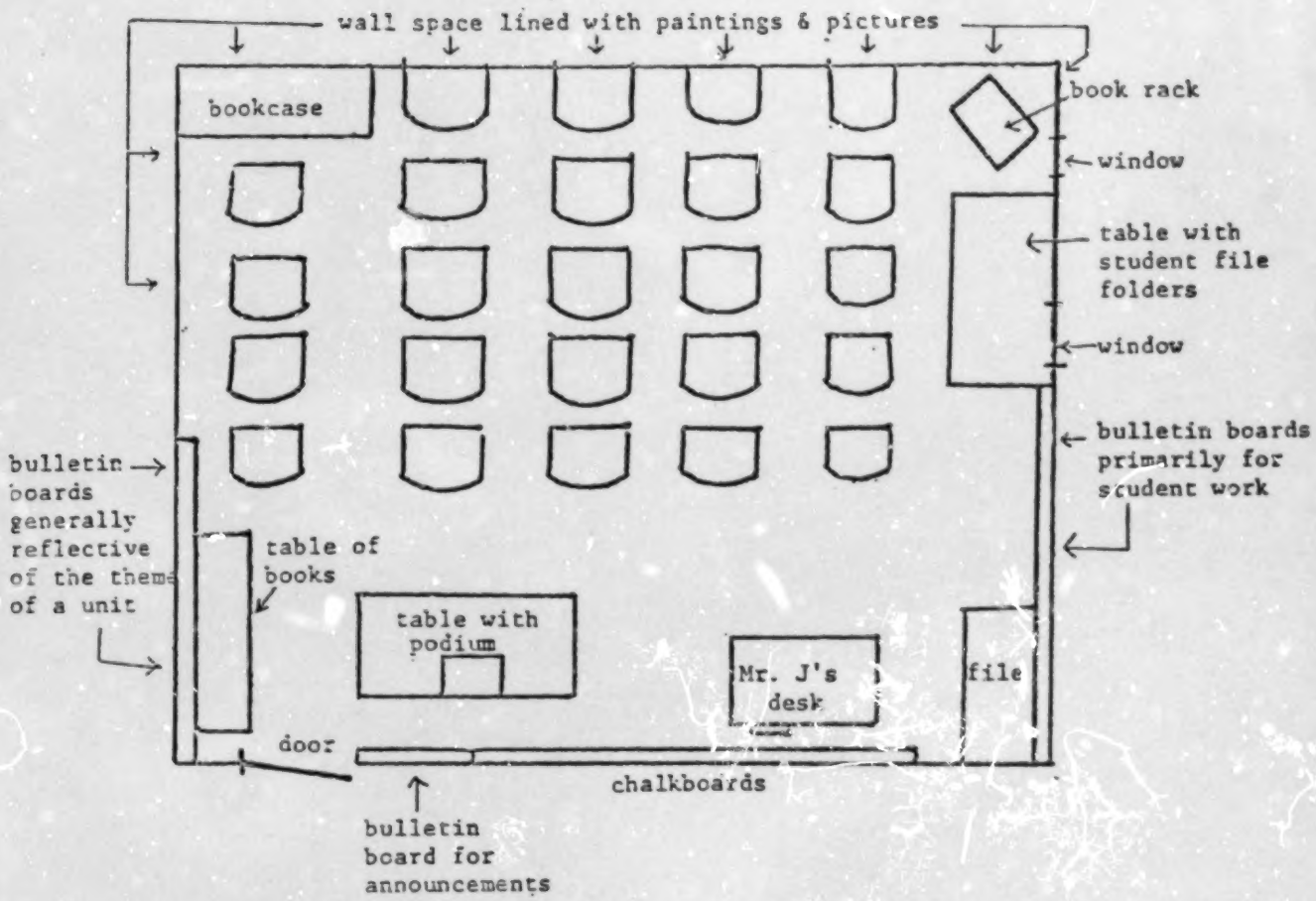

Figure 1. Floor plan of Mr. Jameson's classroom.

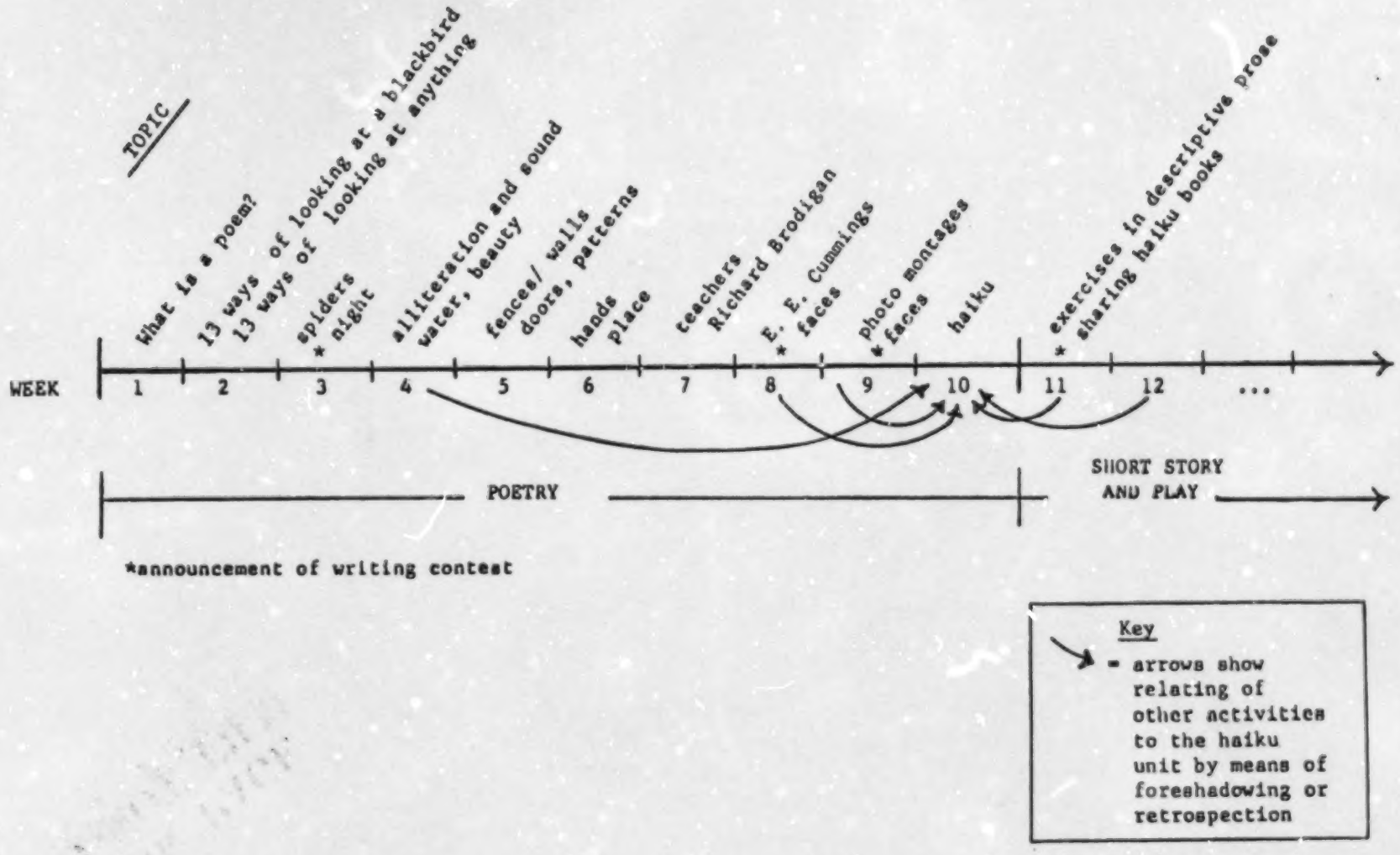

Figure 2. Weekly topics in creative writing class.

of famous poets, listening to poetry set to music, or presenting slides and photographs related to the topic. The number of class periods dedicated to each topic varied from one to five or more.

Figure 2 illustrates the curricular decisions made by Mr. Jameson in choosing topics for the creative writing class. Like other teachers we have studied, Mr. Jameson gave considerable attention to "framing" activities, that is, showing students how activities are related to one another. In our field-work in this class, as in others, we have found that the teacher and students use the framework to give meaning to an otherwise endless flow of written tasks--both to parse that flow into topical units that they can name (e.g., spiders, fences, hands) and to bind the activities together into logical sets that enable sustained writing across times frequently interrupted from outside tne classroom (Florio, 1982). What makes the framing in the creative writing class unique among the classes we have observed, however, is Mr. Jameson's relative freedom to identify and label the units and link them over time by means of foreshadowing and reference to previous units.

Bernstein (1975) distinguishes between curricula with reduced insulation between contents ("open curriculum") and what he calls "closed curriculum," where the borders between contents are strictly defined and frequently punctuated by activities "where the learner has to collect a group of favored contents in order to satisfy some criteria for evaluation" (p. 87).

Bernstein's distinction suggests that the degree to which the writing curriculum is framed from outside either by the teacher or by district mandates is related to the kind and amount of writing required of the student as "academic performance." Aiming to open up facets of the author's role for student writers in the creative writing class and freed somewhat from district mandates by the elective nature of this course, Mr. Jameson worked to

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negotiate a more open curriculum with his students. That curriculum was typified by extended and related writing activities not artificially segmented by tests or other evaluative activities that would render the relation between student writer and teacher respondent one of student as performer for grades and teacher the sole audience.

Teacher Response in Context: The Haiku Unit

Mr. Jameson negotiated his role as teacher in a variety of ways with his students, thereby distancing himself from the putative role of teacher as evaluator. This enabled his students to take greater power in and responsibility for their roles as authors. This was particularly evident in the haiku unit.

The haiku unit, in many aspects, represents the culmination of the writing experiences that preceded it. One theme common to the poetry section of the creative writing class was the exploration of new ways of viewing and experiencing the events, objects, persons and situations of everyday life. In this respect, the creation of haiku poetry--characterized by its simplicity and its capturing of intimate moments from the real world--was an appropriate finale to the poetry section.

Another sense in which the haiku unit was a culminating experience of the first part of the creative writing class was in its connection to a writing contest. As early as November 2, Mr. Jameson began to introduce opportunities for his students to enter writing contests. The writing contests not only motivated and stimulated students to write, but powerfully communicated to students the effectiveness of writing and the prospects of writing for audiences other than the teacher and outside of the classroom walls. In addition, Mr. Jameson, a nationally known photographer who had entered and won many contests, served as a model of a working artist for his students.

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The week before the haiku unit began, Mr. Jameson announced to the class the details of the haiku writing contest. Announcements of writing contests were a frequent occurrence in Mr. Jameson's class. Earlier in the year, there was not much dialogue following Mr Jameson's announcements of the various writing contests. Whether the students became more competent in their writing, more eager to seek other audiences, or more tolerant of Mr. Jameson's announcements is hard to say, but as the semester progressed, the students interacted more with Mr. Jameson about these writing contests. Mr. Jameson announced that the prize for this writing contest was a trip to Japan. Kevin asked, "What's haiku?" Mr. Jameson described haiku as poetry that has three lines, is arranged in 5/7/5 syllabication, "though not necessarily," and that presents one image to the reader--that is, presents a vivid and meaningful picture with elegant economy. He went on to say that the difference "between an okay haiku and one that's really exceptional" is how well the author presents that image.

Mr. Jameson discussed this contest in some detail, telling his students they had "everything to gain, nothing to lose" by entering the contest. The class then moved to a more general discussion of writing contests and photography contests. Mr. Jameson shared some of his own experiences with photography contests, answering questions from the students about various types of contests. He ended the discussion with a warning against entering contests in which one surrenders all rights to one's work. Later in the period, Mr. Jameson came back to the topic of the haiku writing contest, announcing that the class would be discussing haiku poetry in more detail the following week.

Mr. Jameson often foreshadowed events in this way. It may be helpful to refer back to Figure 2. The assignment on which the students were working as

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Mr. Jameson made this announcement was a project called photo montages. Having just finished writing about "faces," Mr. Jameson asked the students to make a statement by combining a picture of a face with other pictures. Besides bringing in magazines, scissors, and glue, Mr. Jameson also brought in several examples of photo montages done by former students. Thus not only did Mr. Jameson foreshadow the haiku section by announcing the haiku contest, he encouraged his students, via the photo montage assignment, to begin to use visual images to make statements about the world around them.

In structuring the curriculum as he did, Mr. Jameson enacted his role as teacher in a variety of ways that both supported the writing process and redefined school writing in such a way that students were writing for purposes other than academic performance and for audiences other than Mr. Jameson. In addition, he modeled for them in his planning for related activities the artistic process that he undertakes when, as a working photographer, he decides to communicate something through photography and, ultimately, to share his work with others through contests.

Mr. Jameson enacted his teaching role in four different ways. We have labeled these ways of teaching "motivating," "creating the space for writing," "coaching," and "modeling." These labels, some actually used by Mr. Jameson, refer to aspects of Mr. Jameson's that we observed and that he and his students described in their journals.

Social Identity and the Teaching of Writing

In thinking about Mr. Jameson's role as respondent to student writers, it is useful to consider social roles and the ways they are negotiated in face-to-face interaction (Goodenough, 1969). Goffman (1961) and others have made a useful distinction between "status" (the position one occupies in social space

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and one's relation to others in the form of reciprocal ties, rights, and duties), "role" (the activities incumbent on a person if s/he were to act solely upon the normative demands of her/his social status), and "role enactment" ("the actual conduct of an individual while on duty in his position") (Goffman, 1961, p. 85). Goffman argues that, in role enactment, one has considerable leeway in how one manages the rights and duties attendant to one's status and that enactment is negotiated with others in the context of face-to-face interaction. In addition, how one enacts one's role has implications for the reciprocal roles of others in the same social situation.

In Mr. Jameson's classroom, his status predicts certain rights and obligations. However, how the teacher enacts his role is negotiated between him and the students and is sensitive to the instructional purposes and context at any given time. How Mr. Jameson enacts his role as teacher has, of necessity, implications for the rights and duties that his students will experience in their roles as student writers.

In the process of such role enactment, a teacher may at one time embrace the teacher role, taking the power to initiate student writing, determine its content and format, and be its sole audience and evaluator. Such embracement, Goffman (1961) notes, is typical of baseball managers during games and traffic police at rush hour--in short, of "anyone occupying a directing role where the performer must guide others by means of gestural signs" (p. 107). When teachers assume such power and responsibility for student writing, it is clear that they can greatly limit the student's role to mere task completion and academic performance for a grade.

In contrast to such role embracement, teachers often distance themselves from the full expression of the putative teacher role according to their curricular and instructional goals and the needs of their students. In what

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Goffman (1961) calls "role distance," the teacher separates her/himself somewhat from her/his role, thereby opening up interactional options to others in the social scene. In doing this, the teacher (or other person with potentially great situational power)

> apparently withdraws by *actively* manipulating the situation . . . the individual is actually denying not the role but the virtual self that is implied in the role for all accepting performers. (pp. 107-108)

Mr. Jameson distances himself from the "virtual self" of the teacher as initiator, framer, and evaluator of student writing in a variety of ways. By an active manipulation of the instructional situation, he is able both to support the writing process for his students and make more of that process available to them.

Teacher as Motivator

Mr. Jameson, in reflecting upon his own journal writing, wrote:

> After rereading this entry, it occurred to me that my main concern as a writing teacher for ninth-graders--in fact writers of any age--is to motivate. To get people into spaces where they are really thinking about what they have to say and are being honest. For me, this is the space where good writing originates.

Just as Mr. Jameson set up his room as a visual buffet, so also did he lay a rich and varied table for his students as he tried to get them interested in and thinking about writing. He chose to motivate his classes in a variety of ways, attracting different students with different lures and casting his line often to try to attract their interest. In the haiku unit, for example, he began with a filmstrip about haiku poetry and passed out a handout on

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haiku.[4] In addition, he offered many books from his own collection that were related to haiku poetry.

Although Mr. Jameson selected several other items for his motivational buffet (e.g., records, slides, photographs, oral readings), we focus here on his use of books. Books allowed Mr. Jameson an opportunity to share with his students a closer look at several facets of the author's role.

The first 35 minutes of the period were spent discussing the kinds of poetry and artwork within each book. Mr. Jameson began by discussing an anthology of haiku poetry that a teacher in the high school brought back with her following a visit to China. This book helped the students to experience the spectrum of topics about which haiku poets write.

The next two books were written by local authors. These books provided an impetus and foundation for class discussion. As was often the case during motivating activities, dialogues between Mr. Jameson and individual students were held aloud so that other interested students could listen and participate. For example, Steve asked if either of the local authors made their living as writers. Mr. Jameson talked briefly about the lives of each of the authors, explaining that both of them have other jobs to support their writing

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[4]Although the purpose of this section is to highlight the various strategies and resources Mr. Jameson chose to motivate his students to write, it is interesting to note the features about haiku he has chosen to highlight by choosing this handout as an introduction. The handout gave a brief history of the development of the genre of haiku from its 17th century origins in Japan to its recent adoption into English and other languages. The word *haiku* translates to "playful phrases." Originally, these simple statements were calligraphied in ink-brush ideographs, often accompanied by a sketch or design. The finished product was called a *haiga*. The handout focused on the relationship of reading and writing haiku poems to living life more fully, tracing the links between haiku poetry and Zen Buddhism. The handout concluded by recommending books for beginners interested in learning more about haiku.

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careers. He talked about his own life, explaining that when he is teaching he gives his all, but that making artwork is his primary career. When asked which was more important to him, he responded, "How can you separate the two?" He said that if he couldn't make artwork, he couldn't teach.

The next book discussed was a collection of image poems, short poems, though not exactly haiku, that capture a moment. Mr. Jameson described them as photographs with words. He went on to say that they are like little windows on the world, and that when one has read enough of someone's haiku or image poems, one has a good idea of how that person views the world.

Mr. Jameson used the books to illustrate potential facets of an author's role beyond the actual writing of poetry. For example, one of the books had a lot of illustrations, and Mr. Jameson commented to Craig that he would be able to use some of his artwork. He reminded Craig of a drawing Craig had done earlier in the year for one of the assignments and said that perhaps Craig could write a haiku to fit it and print the haiku beside the drawing. In this way he was able to make connections to the interests of some of the students who enrolled in the course more for scheduling convenience than for the desire to increase their opportunities to write.

Mr. Jameson also used the books as bridges to discussions of other available resources. Some of the books were about Zen Buddhism. He told the students that when they wrote their first haiku that really worked, they would have had their first Zen moment. He told the class of a local man who was "very into Zen" and recommended that anyone interested should talk to him. He also noted that the Center for Asian Studies at the local university had a lot of information about Zen. He encouraged the students to read all that they could about Zen to help them with their haiku writing, but he added that the

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most important thing the students could do to help them with their haiku writing was to read a lot of haiku.

The books were also used as models for the class' project. Most of the books Mr. Jameson displayed were collections of works by a single artist. One book was completely made by the artist--written, illustrated, and stapled together. This led Mr. Jameson to a discussion of the project for the haiku unit. Each student could experience many facets of the author's role by making his/her own book of haiku poetry. He told the class that this is generally the best project of the year. He had none of the books left from previous years to show them, but felt it was a good sign that people had wanted them back. He talked about some of the books that had been done. One was only 1-1/2 x 3 inches. He said that one had a very intimate feeling while reading it.

With the broader goal of the haiku book project in mind, the assignment for the rest of the period was that the students read haiku from the books, read the handout, and/or work on writing some haiku of their own. He planned for them to spend the rest of the week working on their haiku books.

Teacher as Creator of the Space for Writing

Mr. Jameson said that haiku works best outside and proposed that students go outside to write if they would like. He looked out the window at the rainy, gray sky and commented that today was a good day for haiku. He talked a little about getting into a "haiku state of mind," looking for interesting details or intimate moments. He told his students that one haiku feeds the next until you can't get them down quickly enough. The important thing, he noted, was to get the moment written down. "Worry about the syllables later," he said. He also told the class that they needn't be strict on their 5/7/5 syllabication.

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Many of the students in the class understood what Mr. Jameson meant when he spoke of getting into a frame of mind conducive to writing. Devon, in his first journal entry, wrote

> The space my teacher talks of can only be entered when I feel like writing true feelings and not what people want to read. (Student Journal, 1/21/83)

The students became active as Mr. Jameson finished talking about getting into a "haiku state of mind." Four of the students headed to the library to have their photo montage assignment laminated. Three students turned their desks to face the window. Dan announced that he was going to try to write outside. Some students went up to the table at the front of the room, picked out one of the haiku books, and took it back to their seat. Other students stood around the table, waiting to talk to Mr. Jameson.

The room quieted as the students began reading and writing. There were 20 minutes left in the period. Dan came back in, announcing that it was too cold to write haiku out there. He was looking for haiku moments, but all he could think of was how cold he was. Mr. Jameson remembered two haiku books on the bookrack in the back corner of the room. He opened one of the books, reminded the class that haiku don't have to be serious, and read two funny haikus from the book he had found.

The class became active again as the period neared its end. People began to return the haiku books to the front table and put their notebooks away. As the students left the room, one stopped at the front table to tell Mr. Jameson that he had felt more inspired by the photographs in the book he had looked through than by the haiku poems.

Teacher as Coach

Another facet of the teacher's role we observed Mr. Jameson enact was that of coach. Each of these facets we describe is clearly related to the

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other facets. All are dimensions of the role of teacher that we believe are important to Mr. Jameson and his students. One of our goals in observing and experiencing the creative writing class so extensively was to take the perspective of those involved, to discover the ways they were making sense of the writing process in this class. Though coaching and motivating are similar aspects of the teacher's role, we have chosen to distinguish them here because they look and sound different in the classroom and are distinguished by the participants themselves.

The "teacher as coach" role assumes that the students are motivated to write. As coach, Mr. Jameson supported students in the process of writing. This support was generally offered individually, while motivating activities were generally geared to the entire class. When Mr. Jameson spoke to individuals during motivating activities, it was out loud, for anyone in the class to hear if they were interested. Coaching was most often a one-to-one situation, conducted in quiet voices, at the desk of either Mr. Jameson or the student. Mr. Jameson's coaching of the student writers took many forms--sometimes aimed at offering technical assistance, other times aimed at encouraging the students to be persistent in their writing efforts. We saw an example of each of these forms of coaching during the haiku unit.

Mr. Jameson often walked around the room, talking to students who motioned for his attention. In these situations, his coaching took the form of technical assistance to the student writers. For example, Jeff asked him to look over a haiku he had been working on. Mr. Jameson spent several minutes talking to Jeff, explaining that haikus are attempts to capture a moment and interpretation is up to the reader. Jeff contended that he wanted to make a statement in his haiku and felt that he had done so. Mr. Jameson suggested another strategy Jeff might try if he still wanted to lead the reader in some

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direction would be to present an image in the first two lines of the haiku, put in a dash, and end the haiku with a question. In closing, Mr. Jameson reminded Jeff that traditionally, "the subject matter of haiku has never been heroic, but humble."

In other cases, Mr. Jameson's coaching was more in the spirit of encouragement. One student alluded to this type of coaching when she wrote in her journal, "Mr. Jameson is a great teacher because he puts on no pressures . . . he understands that creativity doesn't always come fast." This type of coaching--encouraging students to continue to write, even during difficult periods--can be illustrated by describing a brief conversation Mr. Jameson had with Tony during class.

Tony was one of the students who had enrolled in creative writing because it fit his schedule. He had become one of the "invisible students" in the classroom, so rarely did he talk in class. Yet he had asked questions about the haiku contest. Two weeks after the haiku unit, he asked Mr. Jameson to help him pick his three best haiku to enter in the contest. Mr. Jameson read over the haiku Tony had given him, commenting that he thought he had the hang of writing haiku. He suggested to Tony that since there was no real rush (the contest deadline was six weeks away), he might "just crank out tons of them" so that a couple of weeks before the deadline "we can choose from 120 to 150 haiku, not just 15 or so." Mr. Jameson reminded Tony of the comment he had written at the end of Tony's haiku book: "More, Tony, give me more."

Teacher as Model

Mr. Jameson modeled his love of artwork and his belief in the importance of practice in the decor of his classroom, his class discussions, and his own lifestyle. He often talked of doing as the most important part of art, giving

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examples about his own life and his own persistence, especially regarding photography. Two evenings a week, Mr. Jameson taught photography at a local arts workshop, and he shared with his students his amazement at the adults who sit through his class without ever taking a photograph. They assume they can learn to take photographs by listening attentively and understanding the mechanics. Mr. Jameson doesn't believe that you can learn to take good photos that way and emphasized the importance of getting out and taking many, many photos, "even if 99% of them are awful."

Discussion

One way to think about Mr. Jameson's teaching is in terms of the way he structured the learning environment and negotiated his role as respondent to student writing. The haiku unit vignette illustrates that Mr. Jameson was neither the sole audience for student writing nor its formal evaluator. As teacher, he served as motivator, coach, and model. Using the writing contest as an "occasion for writing" (Clark & Florio, with Elmore, Martin, Maxwell, & Metheny, 1982), Mr. Jameson helped students to write for audiences other than the teacher and for purposes beyond academic performance.

It has been argued that students learning to write are performing a complex balancing act that includes their expressive intentions, the expectations of their audience, and the subject matter about which they intend to communicate. In addition, they are managing all of this in the medium of the written symbol system with its attendant conventions (Moffett, 1983).

In some sense, student writers learn to manage written discourse in school much as they learn to manage oral discourse in early childhood. However, this time the task may be far more difficult. The catalog of reasons for this difficulty is long and pertains both to writing as a way of communicating and to schools as places in which to write. Not only are students now

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managing a new, second-order symbol system, but they are communicating with an often absent interlocutor. In addition, they are learning to write not in the circle of the family where feedback and response of adults is immediate, meaningful, and supportive, but in classrooms where adult feedback and response are commodities shared among 20 or more students and where evaluation, competition, and abstractness may infuse even the most rudimentary oral and written exchanges.

By the time the student reaches secondary school, all of the above complications may be intensified because, as Moffett points out,

> although younger children often want to write for a "significant" adult, on whom they are willing to be frankly dependent, adolescents almost always find the teacher entirely *too* significant. He is at once parental substitute, civic authority, and the wielder of marks. Any one of these roles would be potent enough to distort the writer-audience relationship; all together, they cause the student to misuse the feedback in ways that severely limit his learning to write. (1983, p. 193)

The acknowledgment of this difficulty in relations between student writer and teacher respondent highlights the socially negotiated nature of school writing. Face-to-face interactions about writing in school are ultimately concerned with negotiating the roles of student and teacher in the composiug process. These negotiations concern the relative rights of students and teachers to identify the purpose, audience, and format of writing done in school (Florio & Clark, 1982).

Studying oral language in classrooms, Mehan (1979) observed that teacher-student interactions are often of the form, "Teacher Elicitation--Student Response--Teacher Evaluation." It has been observed that this structure carries over into the teacher-student relationship in writing (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft, & Reed, 1982). Here the teacher typically determines the subject matter and form of the writing. The student writes something to be evaluated by the teacher. This pattern is atypical of most writing that goes on in the

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world outside classrooms (Varenne, Hamid-Buglione, McDermott, & Morison, 1982). Rarely does one person play the roles of initiator, audience, and evaluator. Rarely is writing's purpose to earn a grade.

Some theorists who have addressed issues of writing curriculum and teaching methods (Emig, 1981; Graves, 1983; Moffett, 1983) have implied that if one approaches learning to write as the acquisition of multiple forms of discourse rather than merely as mastery of technique, sensitivity to the relations between student writer and teacher respondent become critical. If the teacher remains the sole initiator and audience, particularly with older students, the assymetry inherent in ordinary teacher-student discourse potentially stymies and distorts the role of student writer.

Moffett (1983) has argued that a trinity of discourse underlies all writing (p. 11). In this idealized triad, the author writes about his/her intended topic for an audience removed in time and space. In many classrooms, the triad is modified as follows:

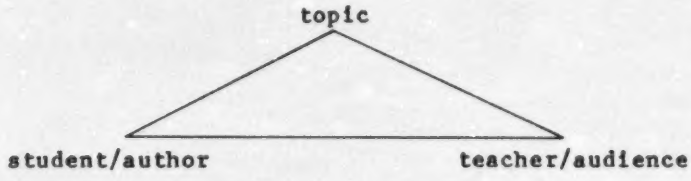

Figure 3. Relationships among student, teacher, and topic in many classroom writing assignments.

In this triad, the student as author is seen primarily as communicating for the purposes of academic performance. The teacher as audience participates as the source of direct instruction in the writing process and the evaluator of student writing. The subject matter about which students write is largely teacher-determined, tightly framed, and almost exclusively expository

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(Applebee, 1981; Shuy, 1981). This triad limits the range of potential relationships among the author and her/his audience, the author and her/his subject matter, and the audience and the subject matter.

School writing is but one expressive alternative that might have been chosen from a greater repertoire available (Basso, 1974). Its negotiation potentially distorts ordinary ways of thinking about relationships among author, subject, and audience. The outcome has implications not only for the kinds of writing skills acquired in practice but for the values and attitudes learned by students about what it means to take the role of author. The outcome of such occasions for writing in school is too often one in which, as Moffett (1983) describes, the student

> may write what he thinks the teacher wants, or what he thinks the teacher doesn't want. Or he writes briefly and grudgingly, withholding the better part of himself. He throws the teacher a bone to passify him, knowing full well that his theme does not at all represent what he can do. (pp. 193-194)

Another way to think of this triad is in terms of what might be called "writing for the real world." This writing involves relationships as represented with solid lines in the following figure:

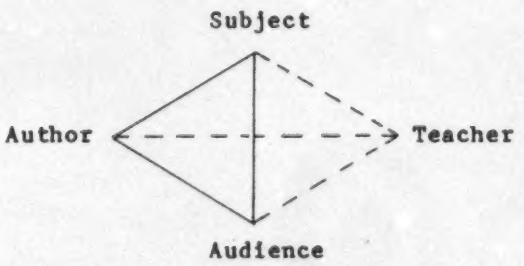

Figure 4. Relationships in writing in Mr. Jameson's class.

This figure is a good representation of the relationships active in the writing situation in Mr. Jameson's class. Mr. Jameson intentionally gave away

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several key rights typically assumed by writing teachers--those of determiner of the author's subject matter and of sole audience for the author's written product. Thus he helped to define for the student author an audience and subject matter outside the classroom and the teacher-student relationship.

In Mr. Jameson's classroom, the teacher motivates students to write, provides support and technical assistance, and acts as a proxy for the student's intended audience when necessary. This is a move from school writing to real-world writing, where although relations among author, topic, and audience will vary depending on the functions of literacy motivating the writing act (e.g., scholarly papers, business letters, friendly letters, personal journals, fiction), the author has considerable leeway to negotiate both the subject matter about which s/he will write and the audience for whom the writing is intended. In this case, it is the job of the author to select the subject matter and to select the format in which to write about it, just as it is the audience's responsibility to receive the written work and to participate in its meaning through the act of reading comprehension.

By rethinking the roles of student and teacher in the writing class and by reconstruing the audience and the purpose of school writing, it might be possible to open up not only the range of responses that teachers can make to support student writing, but the range of purposes to which writing can be put and the range of written topics and forms that can be used and practiced by students. Thus Figure 4 combines the more ordinary relationship among author, audience, and subject with the special relationship between student, teacher, and subject. Figure 4 illustrates that many ways of teaching are important in preparing students to write for the real world. In this kind of writing, the student as author exercises considerably more authority to determine the subject matter of her/his writing and can identify a variety of audiences or a

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range of significant others to whom s/he intends to write for various purposes. Occasionally, the audience might be the teacher, but most often the audience might be peers, parents, other members of the community, and audiences more distant in time and space. As a coach and provider of resources, the teacher offers students ideas about subject matter and serves as a proxy audience responding to the student's writing as one of the intended audiences might. In this way, the teacher role is enacted in several ways, including foreshadowing or providing context for the writing act, modeling the role of a writer, motivating and providing resources to the student writer, creating the space within which writing can happen, and coaching by offering rhetorical strategies and encouraging responses to student efforts.

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